

George Mason to George Washington, February 6, 1775, with Plan for Militia, Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers. Published by the Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Edited by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton.

FROM GEORGE MASON, ESQ.

GUNSTON HALL February 6th. 1775.

DEAR SIR,

My Friend Colo. Harrison (who is now at yr. House) promised to spend a Day or two with me on his way down. I beg the Favour of you to present my Compliments to Him; and excuse my being under the disagreeable Necessity of being from Home, until the latter End of this Week; when if He is not gone down, I shall be very glad to see Him here.— Poor Mrs. Eilbeck has had a Cancer on her Breast for several Months which has increased so much lately as to affect the whole Breast, upon which the Doctor has determined that there is a Necessity for extirpating it imediatly by amputation of the Breast, before any of the Roots or Fibres of the Cancer affect the Vital Parts; & when I came Home Yester from Alexandria, I found a Messenger here, desiring me to go over to-day upon this Occasion, Wth. my Daughter Nancy; I apprehend such an Opperation must be a very dangerous one, & therefore shall not care to leave Mrs. Eilbeck for two or three Days after it is perform'd.

—

Inclosed you have a Copy of the plan I drew for embodying the people of this County; in which you'll be pleased to make such Alterations as you think necessary.—You will

Library of Congress

observe I have made it as general as I well cou'd, this I thought better at first than to descend to particulars to Uniform &c. which perhaps may be more easily done, when the Companys are made up.¹ —

I suppose you have seen the King's Speech & the Addresses of both Houses in the last Maryland Paper; from the Style in which they Speak of the Americans, I think we have little Hopes of a Speedy Redress of Grievances; but on the Contrary we may expect to see coercive & vindictive Measures still pursued. It seems as if the King either had not received or was determined to take no Notice of the proceedings of the Congress —

I beg my Comps. to Mrs. Washington & the Family at Mount-Vernon, and am

Dear Sir Yr. affecte. & obedt. Sert. G MASON

vid: postscript on

— another paper

P.S. I beg pardon for having almost forgot to say anything in Answer to yr. favr respecting the Choice of Delegates from this County to attend the Convention at Richmond. It appears to Me that the Burgesses for the County are our proper Representatives upon this Occasion; and that the best Method to remove all Doubt or Objection, as well as to save Trouble, will be for the County Committee to meet & declare make an Entry & Declaration of this, as their Opinion. —

Would it not be proper for the Committee of Correspondence to write to the two Mr. Fitzhughs, Mr. Turberville, & such other Gentlemen as live out of this County & have Quarters in it² acquainting them wth: the ord: of the Committee relative to the Payment of 3/ for each Tytheable, & desiring them to give their Overseers, or Agents here Orders accordingly? —

G M —

1 “Threatened with the Destruction of our antient Laws & Liberty, and the Loss of all that is dear to British Subjects & Freeman,—justly alarmed with the Prospect of impending Ruin,—firmly determined, at the hazard of our Lives, to transmit to our Children & Posterity those sacred Rights to which Ourselves were born; & thoroughly convinced that a well regulated Militia, composed of the Gentlemen Freeholders & other Freeman, is the natural Strength, and only safe & stable Security of a free Government, & that such Militia will relieve our Mother Country from any Expeence in our Protection & Defence, will obviate the Pretence of a necessity for taxing us on that Account, & render it unnecessary to keep any standing Army (ever dangerous to Liberty) in this Colony. We the Subscribers, Inhabitants of Fairfax County, have freely & voluntarily agreed, & hereby do agree & solemnly promise to inroll & Embody ourselves into a Militia for this County, intended to consist of all the able-bodied Freeman from eighteen to fifty Years of Age, under Officers of their own Choice; & for that Purpose to form ourselves into distinct Companies of Sixty eight Men each; and so soon as the said Companies, or any of them in convenient neighbourhoods & Districts are completed, to chuse from among our Friends and Acquaintance, upon whose Justice Humanity & Bravery we can relie, a Captain, two Lieutenants, an Ensign & four Serjeants for each Company; every Captain respectively to appoint four Corporals & a Drummer for his Company, which Election of Officers is to be annual in any Company, if the Majority of the Company think fit; & whenever a sufficient Number of Companies shall be made up; all the said Companies are to be formed into a Regiment, under the Command of a Colonel, Lieutenant-Colonel, & Major, to be chosen by the Captains, Lieutenants & Ensigns of the said Companies; which Election of Field-Officers is to be annual also, if the Majority of the Officers think fit.—And such of us as have, or can procure Riphel Guns, & understand the use of them, will be ready to form a Company of Marksmen or Light-Infantry for the said Regiment, chusing our own Officers as aforesaid, & distinguishing our Dress, when we are upon Duty, from that of the other Companies, by painted Hunting-Shirts, and Indian Boots, or Caps; as shall be found most convenient.—Which Regulation & Establishment is to be preserved & continued, until a regular and proper Militia Law for the Defence of the Country shall be enacted by the Legislature of this Colony—And we do Each of us, for ourselves respectively, promise and engage to keep a good Firelock in proper Order, & to furnish Ourselves as soon as possible with, & always keep by us, one Pound of Gun Powder, four Pounds of Lead, one Dozen Gun-Flints, & a pair of Bullet-Moulds, with a Cartouch-Box, or powder-horn & Bag for Balls—That we will use our best Endeavours to perfect Ourselves in the Military Exercise & Discipline, & therefore will pay due Obedience to our Officers, & regularly attend such private & general Musters as they shall appoint—And that we will always hold Ourselves in Readiness, in Case of Necessity, Hostile-Invasion, or real Danger, to defend & preserve to the utmost of our Power, Our Religion, the Laws of our Country, & and the just Rights & Privileges of our fellow-Subjects, Our Posterity, & Ourselves, upon the Principles of the English Constitution.”—The above plan is bound in manuscript with George Mason’s letter to Washington. It is also to be found in Force’s American Archives, Fourth Series, vol. i. p. 1145.

2 This probably refers to Henry Fitzugh, of “Eagle’s Nest,” Stafford County, who among other estates owned “Ravensworth,” in Fairfax County; William Fitzhugh, of “Marmion,” Stafford County, who had also property interests in Fairfax; and John Turberville, who lived at that time in Westmoreland County, but on whose property in Fairfax near the Little Falls, the town of Turberville was established in 2798.